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Projections

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Poetry by Tesla Klinger

PROJECTIONS

The single press of a button
And everything is known now.
I long for the times when we contemplated
The choices and consequences
Of choosing wrong when
We were allowed to pick one movie
From the Family Video rental store.
My brother and I had to cooperate
Otherwise we missed out on
An hour or two of dwelling in other worlds
Given to us by the magic of a black plastic
Box that might melt in the sun on hot days.

The tape stretched when we hit pause—
Or that's at least what adults said—
And sometimes my brother had to tighten
The tape on the twin spool
By sticking his little finger in the
Doubled white eyes and twist.
Afterwards, we were consoled
As we stuck the black package

In the mouth of the receiver
And unraveled the subtle secrets
Caught between still frames of motion.
Double speed forward and a line
Down the screen in reverse.
I used to slide the tapes out of their cardstock boxes
Up and down up and down
Coming out cool against my child hand
The edge catching sometimes
On that little white button whose purpose
Was to loosen a too tightly wound cassette.
If the packaging was white plastic,
I would pop the connecting tabs loose
And smell the queer chemicals
Emanating from the picture possessor.
I also used to sit too close to the screen
Just to hear the subtle hum given off
From the warm VCR while the warnings
Displayed in oscillating silence.

And I take it for granted
The times I had to choose.
Now, everything is instant and
No effort or thought of consequence
Is considered when I tap a video
With no hum or smell or memories attached.
But I have the formative experiences
Which allow the concept of tapes and film
To filter into my mind the nostalgia of
The Family Video rental store
And of black plastic boxes that might
Melt in the sun on hot days.